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19 August 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Information Services

FROM:

Chief, Classification Review Division

SUBJECT: A Suggestion for Handling Certain Manuscripts
Written by Current and Former CIA Employees (U)

1. The statistics over the past several years demonstrate that the number of intelligence-related writings by present and former CIA employees has steadily increased. This constant flow of information has made available to the public an increasingly detailed picture of the CIA even though the publications review procedure has been established to regulate that flow. This procedure has not been (and probably cannot be made) perfect, and in spite of the best intentions by all parties concerned, some significant disclosures of classified information have been made. These disclosures have included the names of CIA personnel, the location or confirmation of the existence of CIA stations and bases abroad, the identification of CIA organizational units at various levels, the covers used (even specific cover slots), operational methods used, internal administrative procedures, foreign liaison relationships, operational targets, the complete story of actual cases, and even the identification of sources. Inevitably, as vague and minor details accumulate, they take on larger meaning, and the whole comes out greater than the sum of its parts. (U)

2. There are few aspects of an intelligence service and its activities which are not sensitive to some degree. Supportive of this fact is the broad sweep of the CIA regulation covering access to, and release of, official information. This regulation defines official information as all information, whether classified or unclassified, that is originated, received, or controlled by the Agency in pursuance of law or in connection with the discharge of official duties. It is the policy of this Agency that such information is not to be used for personal use or benefit and may not be copied or removed from the files of the Agency for any purpose except in connection with official business. When people join an organization of this nature, they recognize that they are taking a position of trust and confidentiality. This is formally established and reinforced by the signing of a secrecy agreement. From that point forward they are almost constantly exposed to sensitive and classified information either by working directly in clandestine activities, in support of them, or in processing the product from them. The information gained from this constant, personal, and intimate immersion will so permeate one's experience that it would hardly be possible to write or speak meaningfully about intelligence matters without drawing upon this knowledge or sorting

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it out from information learned elsewhere. To stay in the business one must learn to protect the Agency's covert activities and the sensitive information with which one comes into contact. That the majority of personnel recognize this need and successfully abide by it is attested to by the small number fired for security indiscretions. Recently, however, this requirement for secrecy seems to be accepted by some as valid while one works for CIA but somehow is considered to lose its validity when one leaves the Agency, as though termination of one's employment also terminates the requirement to protect this sensitive information, or causes the information to lose its sensitivity because personal involvement has ceased. (U) 25X1

Certainly, in the field of U.S. foreign relations, it seems reasonable to assume that the public exposures of CIA involvement in restoring the Shah to the throne in Iran played a role in the takeover 26 years later of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the holding of our hostages. (C)

4. To prevent the compromise of classified information in the writings of present and former Agency employees, the Agency implemented the publications review procedure. The internal guidelines used in review have been sharply drawn so that they fall well within legal requirements, and in practice they have been meticulously and defensively applied to avoid confrontation and possible legal actions. In the past, some material has been released that we would withhold today under current guidelines, an indication that we have recognized that this threat is developing and therefore have found it necessary to become more restrictive. From those who favor the release of more information we are continually confronted with arguments which are usually reduced to "if you released that then, you should be able to release this now." Once any release begins, there is constant pressure to release more, in an increasingly concentric and never-ending cycle. Some authors have reacted almost maliciously to our deletions by noting them and then refashioning the sensitive information in wording that still would tend to compromise but not essentially be classifiable. (U)

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5. To staunch this flow of sensitive information, it is recommended that CIA adopt a guideline that would withhold in toto all writings by employees and former employees that are non-fictional accounts of actual situations and activities conducted by or on behalf of the CIA. This would include accounts of all covert operational activities of an FI, CI, and CA nature as well as those administrative, developmental, and support activities related to them. It would include internal administrative, procedural, and operational methods used to process intelligence information and produce a finished intelligence product. Writings concerned solely with finished intelligence or other types of products normally disseminated by CIA, and scholarly writings concerned with the general situation in the intelligence field or in the intelligence community could be published after appropriate review and approval. Roman-a-clef novels with CIA themes would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and purely fictional writings that vary widely from true accounts will be released. It is suggested that this guideline be implemented by revising the Agency's regulations on review of publications and by issuing the necessary guidelines to reviewers who will recommend withholding entire manuscripts that fall within the restricted categories. The basis for withholding will normally be to protect intelligence activities, sources and methods, with finer distinctions possible to protect foreign government information and CIA organizational data. (U)

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Distribution:

Orig - Addressee

1 - Manuscript Review Policy & Procedures

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